

persistent as ants or the ocean.
i suppose if i feel the urge
to muse over the shape of the
earth, i must settle for looking
out on the back field,
although it's obvious that
this field gives me very little
to go on. and forget any
greenness out there.
unfortunately, so far spring
has been very stingy.
but i don't question this
stinginess; i accept it.
it is just how this season wishes
to express itself. for my
own sanity i must be as
gracious of spirit as possible.
i lie in my cold bed
looking at the grayness
clinging to the ceiling,
as slowly i
recite the alphabet
to myself.

LASAGNA

father's day, today; hot day, muggy too.
brought over a book on gardening, wrapped
in chinese newspapers i'd asked for while
picking up some take-out. a photograph too,
wrapped in the same newspapers, taken of me and
my father by my landlord's oldest son, who had
enlarged and placed it in a plastic frame.
in this photo i have my father in a headlock
which he cannot escape from. my face
is stern, unplayful, looking straight
at the camera, and i am standing very erect.
his face is crazy with laughter, and he looks
exactly like he does in a photograph
taken of him when he was five years of age.
we took our usual stroll through the garden.
i took the safari hat from the garage
and the sunglasses from my car, and we
went up one row and down another.
it's very scientific and immaculate, this
garden of his. the sweet potatoes
were just starting to assert themselves
above ground. he was in good spirits, and
for the most part i registered
everything he said. this year
i want to make a video of my father
working in his garden, and get

my mother into it too, maybe talking
to the asparagus in the kitchen.
anyway, we hung the photograph
in the kitchen, had dinner,
after which we watched
a documentary on coney island.
my older sister called from
north carolina, wishing my father
a happy father's day; my
younger sister had called from
jersey before i had arrived.
my mother had made lasagna.
it was his day,
and it was what
he had wanted.

BLACK WALNUT TREES

my father gave me some black walnut trees,
little things, about two, three inches in height,
to plant around the farmhouse here. every so often
he'll find one growing in or around his garden.
sometime back he was visiting a friend in jersey
and this man gave my father a bunch of black walnuts
from a tree he had growing in his yard.
my father brought them home, but my mother threw
them out on my father's compost pile, in
defeat, not being able to open them up
easily enough. eventually, after the compost
was put to use, these black walnut trees
started shooting up everywhere. today
he pulled one out of the ground to show me.
and the walnut itself was still there,
black and split open, the little tree being
nourished by the meat of the nut.
so, tomorrow i am going to plant these trees,
after talking to the landlord to see
where he might like them put.
when my father was standing there,
in his garden, holding up the little tree,
the walnut dangling from its roots,
i couldn't help noticing how incredibly
thin he has grown. he talked about
his friend, the one who had given him
the black walnuts, saying that he had died
some months ago from a stroke. before
today i had never known such a tree even existed.
i put the trees he had given me
on the floor of the car by the back seat,
each tree potted in its own paper cup.
other plants were there too; i forget
their names. and in a bucket of water